

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

MARCH 3, 2003

The legal voters of the Town of Ripton met at the Community House in Ripton on Monday, March 3, 2003, at 7:30 p.m. to act upon articles one through seven of the 2003 Warning. There were about 80 people in attendance.

This is a summary of the minutes—a complete version can be reviewed at the Town Office.

Mid-way through the Meeting, business was suspended to allow State Senator Claire Ayer to address the gathering. She briefly reviewed ongoing activity in the committees on which she serves: Agriculture, Transportation, and Finance (including its Act 60 Committee). After mentioning an

agricultural marketing and development project and Addison County's transportation funding status, Senator Ayer discussed possible Act 60 revisions at some length. She explained that any revisions are still very much "in process."

Article 1: Will the Town vote the sum of \$259,531.40 to pay General Fund and Road expenses for the ensuing year, and pay outstanding orders or obligations of the Town, with interest, the tax rate on the 2003 Grand List to be determined by the Selectmen, divided as follows:

Roads, including winter work:	\$138,650.00
General Fund Costs:	\$95,981.40
Enhancement Grant and Community House Roof:	\$ 24,900.00
Total:	\$259,531.40

Selectman Bill Ford reviewed the following items:

- The Enhancement Grant's intent is to arrive at a Master Plan for the village center, particularly the area of the Community House, Town Office and Church. It is possible that work on curbing could occur this year. After addressing the village center the plan would be to pursue future grants and/or implement improvements on a piece-by-piece basis within the budget.
- The Community House roof will be replaced with a standing seam metal roof. Color samples are with the Historic District Commission, and ice rails are included in the plans.
- Recent problems with the Community House furnace necessitated several

thousand dollars' worth of cleaning; the claim for this is with our insurance company. As there have been questionable occurrences with the furnace, locks have been changed as a safety measure.

- The State and Forest Service plan to widen the first bridge on the Goshen Road, necessitating a few days' road closure. Notification will be posted in advance.

The following questions from the Meeting were then addressed:

- In response to a question about the necessity of widening the Goshen Road bridge, Mr. Ford explained that it would improve access. The Forest Service is interested in safer access for logging trucks, and there will be no cost to the

Town. Town Clerk Tim Hanson observed there was also scour under the abutment, making the bridge a bit unsafe—the widening project should improve safety.

- The Enhancement Grant’s intent was questioned, and whether it would have any effect on property values. Mr. Ford replied that the intent is to leverage funds with Ripton’s 20% share of costs in order to enhance aesthetics around the village’s three central buildings. He stated that the first step is to enhance access and improve curbing/edging and the safety of playground equipment. As to the bigger picture, there is some community interest in a pedestrian bridge paralleling the Bridge of Flowers (to make it safer to cross). Selectman Laurie Cox mentioned the plan for an island with plantings – in addition to beautification such an island is supposed to have a traffic calming effect.
- It was asked how townspeople could know when there were meetings about the Enhancement Grant. Warren King explained that the Conservation Commission had held three meetings, all of which were posted. Twelve to fourteen people attended. Mr. Ford observed that the Conservation Commission had expressed an interest in moving this project forward and had solicited a lot of community input. Barry

King suggested that anyone with an interest in attending meetings inform her and she would alert them by telephone.

- It was asked if the Community House roof is leaking. Mr. Ford replied that it had not leaked this year but had in the past.
- A townsperson opined that people on the North Branch Road were out of the communications loop and asked if notices could be placed at the East Middlebury post office. Tim Hanson replied that he had tried this a few years ago and been refused permission but he could try again.
- A townsperson returned to the subject of the Community House roof, asking if there had been ice dams and advocating repair to alleviate ice dams rather than replacing the roof. Mr. Ford explained that we have already contracted for the roof replacement, the cost of which was voted last year. There was brief discussion of roofing material types and their longevity.

Article 1 was voted in the affirmative by unanimous voice vote.

Article 2: Will the Town vote the sum of \$17,500 to Ripton Fire and Rescue to help pay Fire Department and First Response expenses for the year?

Erik Eriksen spoke to the article, noting that the budget was an operating budget. He said there were 40 calls in the past year: 24 by First Responders and 16 by the Fire Department.

Mr. Eriksen announced plans for upcoming programs in extinguisher training, voluntary home safety inspections, and cadet training for teenagers.

Mr. Eriksen mentioned the desirability of an auxiliary, as the Fire Department does not have adequate manpower for fund-raising. He also stated that the Lions Club had donated \$450 to provide backboards.

Article 2 was voted in the affirmative on a unanimous voice vote.

Article 3: The Fire Department and First Response Squad continues to try to acquire grant funding for new quarters from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FEMA requires a 25% match from the Town for such a project. Will the Town vote a sum not to exceed \$62,500.00 (25% of \$250,000.00) to affirm its support for the construction of a new Fire Station and First Response quarters? These funds would not be expended unless FEMA funding is actually approved and until the Town has had an opportunity to review plans for the new quarters.

Tim Hanson gave a brief history of the Fire Department's need for a new building. He explained the current building's inadequacies and recalled its flooding during the last culvert failure. He mentioned the FEMA grants of \$98,000 and \$50,000: the \$98,000 was retracted three months ago but now may be reinstated. While the Fire Department does not have concrete plans to present to the Town at this juncture, it needs the Town's support to leverage FEMA money.

Plans are not overly ambitious, envisioning room for four trucks, small quarters and a shower for decontamination. A recent quote for a steel building was \$75,000. Land acquisition, probably from the Ripton School, is anticipated to cost \$35,000-\$50,000. A rough estimate of needed funds is in the area of \$250,000.

Article 3 was voted in the affirmative on a unanimous voice vote.

Article 4: Will the Town authorize the Selectmen to add an additional \$5,000 to the reappraisal fund created in 2001? (Total as of 12/31/02 is \$10,087.21.) As voted last year, if the Listers begin the process of reappraisal, the total of these funds would become available for Listers' use, with the approval of the Selectmen.

Alison Joseph explained that the \$5,000 would continue to build up the reappraisal fund, but that this is probably the last year this item will be needed. A new computer was purchased last year. This year there will

be software purchases and the costs of revising the land schedule.

Article 4 was voted in the affirmative on a unanimous voice vote.

Article 5: Will the Town have current property and personal taxes collected by the Treasurer, with a tax due date of November 3, 2003?

There was no discussion, and Article 5 was voted in the affirmative on a unanimous voice vote.

Article 6: Will the Town vote to authorize the Town Clerk to add names to the Voter Checklist without a meeting of the Board of Civil Authority agreeable to the provisions of 24 V.S.A. 2144b?

Tim Hanson explained the current process. This article would streamline the process by enabling the Town Clerk to add names to the checklist without convening a meeting of the Board of Civil Authority. The process for

removal of voter names would not be changed by this article.

Article 6 was voted in the affirmative by unanimous voice vote.

Article 7: Any other business proper to come before this meeting.

Nola Kevra inquired whether there would ever be another piano in the Community House. Mr. Hanson observed that moving a piano scars the floor badly and that the winter cold precluded keeping a piano tuned. No replacement is planned.

Richard Kimler invited townspeople to attend the community pot luck dinners. He also requested the Selectboard send a note of appreciation to Miriam Nelson to acknowledge her many years as Town Clerk in Norton.

Barry King noted that Freeman Allen will be stepping down as Town Moderator after 24 years of excellent service. Mr. Allen received enthusiastic and prolonged applause.

Sally Buteau expressed concern about excessive speeds at which people drive throughout the Town, especially on Maiden Lane, Natural Turnpike, and Peddler's

Bridge Road. Bill Ford responded that we pay for 32 hours per month for the Sheriff's Department to patrol our roads, in four-hour time blocks. If speeding is noticed at a particular time of day, townspeople could notify the Town Clerk's Office and perhaps a particular patrolling schedule could be arranged. Ms. Buteau said that she has seen cars speed down Peddler's Bridge Road, losing control. Ann Barker cited the North Branch as a problem; Jim Doolan cited Goshen Road. Tim Hanson said that VTRANS has been reluctant to use traffic calming techniques such as speed bumps, but perhaps they would act if pressured by enough citizen interest.

Warren King noted that the warning for Article 3 on page 101 of the Town Report (relative to voting by Australian Ballot on March 4) should read "Zoning Regulations and Subdivision Regulations" (not Tower Regulations).